

# Wrestling in Prayer (Part 5)

Sunday, February 7, 2021

## **Colossians 4:12**

*12 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always **wrestling in prayer** for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.*

## OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

Review (Parts 1-4)

In our series on **PRAYER**, we began by discussing the basic **PRINCIPLES OF PRAYER** we must first **WRESTLE WITH...**

- Prayer is first and foremost about relationship
- Prayer is believing in and understanding who God is
- Prayer is not a formula
- Prayer is not telling God what to do
- Prayer is not bribing or manipulating God
- Prayer is not bringing God into conformity with our will but bringing our will into conformity with God's

Then we learned to pray for **DAILY BREAD, WRESTLING TO MOVE...**

- from **FEAR** to **FAITH**
- from **DOUBT** to **TRUST**
- **COMPLAINING** to **THANKSGIVING**
- **ANXIETY** to **PEACE**

We talked about Wrestling in Prayer for **A WORD FROM GOD** when, like John the Baptist, we find ourselves in a personal prison of sickness and disease, persecution, impossible situations, unanswered prayers, devastating circumstances. A place of confinement, loneliness, discouragement, questioning, doubt, depression, fear. A place where we find ourselves wrestling with questions like

Why am I here?

How long will I be here?

Why doesn't God get me out of here?

Is God going to get me out of here?

Was I wrong about everything?

Did I do something wrong?

Has God forgotten about me?

As we wrestle in prayer, we hear the voice of the Lord speak to us...

- The Kingdom of God is so much bigger than my own personal circumstances
- Keep the Faith
- I see your integrity and devotion
- Persecution and struggle are part of the package
- You're not alone in your struggle
- The Kingdom is advancing
- There will always be people who are upset with you
- You are my child
- It's ok to be tired
- I will take care of you

Last week we saw how important it is for us to Wrestle in Prayer for THE LOST. Praying that...

- the EYES of those who already believe will be OPENED TO SEE to see those who are still lost
- the HEARTS of those who believe will be MOVED WITH COMPASSION at the condition of the lost
- our RESPONSE to the need would be one of ACTION
  
- their EYES would be OPENED to their true condition
- their HEARTS would be CONVICTED of the TRUTH of their sin, their eternity, and their need to repent
- they would RESPOND by putting their FAITH in God's love, Forgiveness and Power to give them a new life.

Everything we have been talking about points back to that first part of the Lord's Prayer

### **Matthew 6:9-10**

**9** “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
**10** your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

I want to go back to that phrase in Colossians 4 that talks about what Epaphras was praying for.

### **Colossians 4:12**

***12** Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.*

In order to stand firm and become mature, we must pray that we **OVERCOME TEMPTATION**

One of the most underutilized areas of prayer that we will talk about is Praying to Overcome Temptation. Again, we will see that wrestling in prayer to overcome temptation has two separate parts to it

This type of prayer begins by humbling ourselves

### **2 Chronicles 7:14**

**14** if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

This whole process is about humbling ourselves and the outcome of forgiveness and healing depends upon it.

Likewise, as we wrestle in prayer to overcome temptation, we must first of all wrestle to **HUMBLE OURSELVES...**

1. **BELIEVING God EXISTS** (Our Father - who art - in heaven)

### **Hebrews 11:6**

**6** And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him **must believe that he exists** and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

2. **ACCEPTING that God is absolutely HOLY and that His ways are PERFECT** (hallowed by your name)

### **John 14:6**

**6** Jesus answered, "I am the **way and the truth** and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

3. **OBEDIENTLY living out those truths in our lives** (Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven)

Ezekiel 28 speaks of the pride of Satan being his downfall, and it is that pride that he seeks to exploit in the hearts of every person.

### **Ezekiel 28:2**

**2** ...this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "In the pride of your heart you say, "I am a god; I sit on the throne of a god... But you are a mere mortal and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god.

A pride that refuses to acknowledge the existence of God but rather replaces God with the exaltation of man.

A pride that seeks to re-write the truths of God with man-made truths. Truths which are opposed to God's ways. Truths that are constantly changing. Truths that accommodate the sinful desires of man rather than the holiness of God. (The Equality Act)

A pride that thumbs its nose at holiness and obedience as being outdated and unnecessary but rather says do what feels good to YOU

So, as we wrestle in prayer to OVERCOME TEMPTATION, we must, in HUMILITY, submit ourselves to these truths again and again because, as the scripture says about Jesus temptation in the desert...

**Luke 4:13 (AMP)**

**13** When the devil had finished every temptation, he [temporarily] left Him until a more opportune time.

The devil will be back to tempt us in these areas again and again

I believe part of Epaphras' wrestling in prayer involved praying for the believers in Colossi to OVERCOME TEMPTATION so they could... *stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.*

Let's dig a little deeper in what this kind of prayer involves. Once again, our model of prayer is the Lord's prayer.

**Matthew 6:13**

**13** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. *for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

First of all, let's deal with the phrase... *lead us not into temptation*

Every time I read that phrase, I think, wait a minute, do we really believe that we have to ask God to not lead us into temptation? Almost as if we believe, if I don't pray and remind God not to lead me into temptation then he might do just that.

The fact is God would never lead us into temptation

### **James 1:13-15**

**13** When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; **14** but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. **15** Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

We must understand that it is our own evil desires that lead us into temptation. The problem with how we read this phrase is where we put the comma or pause. The emphasis in this phrase should be put in the first two words. LEAD US (comma, pause) not into temptation (like we do when we take the lead ourselves) but deliver us from the evil one (the one who does try to tempt us by capitalizing on our own sinful desires)

**We wrestle in prayer to OVERCOME TEMPTATION by asking God to lead us or give us DIRECTION**

Remember we humble ourselves to accept that God is absolutely holy and that His ways are perfect. To overcome temptation, we must pray for our eyes to see and hearts to understand the DIRECTION that God has given us and then we must follow it.

This is indeed a wrestling match because there are many so called truths bombarding us every day that seek to lead us in a direction that leads us away from God.

In the Garden of Eden, God gave Adam and Eve direction. The serpent came along and gave them different directions, directions that led them into temptation.

God will lead us, if we will listen and follow. His Word gives us direction, His Holy Spirit teaches and convicts us, giving us direction

### **2 Peter 1:3-4**

**3** His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. **4** Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Wrestle in prayer to discard the misleading direction fed to you by the world which will lead you into temptation. Pray that the lies of the enemy would be exposed and that the truths of God would be your guide

### **Psalm 119:33-37**

**33** Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees, that I may follow it to the end. **34** Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart. **35** Direct me in

the path of your commands, for there I find delight. **36** Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. **37** Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.

Now let's consider the phrase... *deliver us from the evil one*

### **1 Corinthians 10:13**

**13** No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. (In other words, your situation is not unique. You are not the exception. Even though the enemy will try to convince you that in your case, giving in to the temptation is justified, it is no more justified than anyone else temptation to go against God's will) And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

**We wrestle in prayer to OVERCOME TEMPTATION focusing on the PROVISION that God has given us.**

We are led away into temptation when the devil and our own evil desires cause us to focus on what we don't have rather than on what we do have. And the crazy thing is, because of God's loving proviso. There is always more that we do have than we don't have

Consider again Adam, and Eve's temptation in the garden. God provided an abundance of everything they needed

### Genesis 3:1-3

**3** Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

**2** The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, **3** but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

All that provision but the serpent got them to focus on the one tree they were supposed to eat from. And why should they do this? So, they could have what they didn't have equality with God rather than all the benefits of remaining innocent and under his care

King David, began to focus on what he didn't have, when he began watching her from the roof (insert irony here) of his palace. He had it all... wives, power, success, riches all provided by God but rather than be thankful for that he wanted what God would not provide. Another man's wife

One of the tools that God has given us to wrestle against temptation is thankfulness. Take time in prayer to truly thank God for all he has provided focusing on what He has already given you and not on what he has said you should not have

**Finally, we wrestle in prayer to OVERCOME TEMPTATION by standing in His STRENGTH**

Notice the closing statements of The Lord's Prayer. *for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Jesus closes this prayer by reminding us that all of this depends upon Gods power and strength. When we attempt to stand in our own strength, we will fall. But when we choose to stand in His strength, we will be able to endure any temptation.

Ask him for His strength to overcome Temptation.

**Psalm 73:25-26**

**25** Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. **26** My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

You don't have to give in to that temptation to look. You don't have to give in to that temptation to get angry and let your emotions control you. You don't have to give in to that temptation to believe the lies of the enemy and follow the ways of the world. You don't have to give in to that temptation to get ahead of God and do things your own way. You don't have to give in to that temptation to sin no matter what form that sin may take. Humble yourself, wrestle in prayer, submit to the direction that God gives you in His word and through the conviction of His Holy Spirit. Thank Him for the provision He has blessed you with, asking Him to help you focus your eyes on what you have, not what you don't have. Confess your weakness and stand in His strength. When you do, you WILL OVERCOME EVERY TEMPTATION